

# Pavlov's Buzz? Mobile Vibrations as Conditioned Rewards and Modifiers of Consumer Decision-Making

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## **Abstract**

People spend a large portion of their day interacting with vibrating mobile devices, yet how we respond to the vibrotactile sensations emitted by these devices, and their effect on consumer decision-making is largely unknown. Integrating recent work on haptic sensory processing and classical conditioning, the current research examines the relationship between vibration duration and reward response, how rewarding vibrations modify decision-making, and the underlying mechanism phenomenon. We find that mobile vibrations of intermediate length evoke a reward response which in turn boosts purchasing in ecological online shopping environments. We further show that these effects are amplified for younger and more impulsive consumers, and provide evidence that the observed effect occurs due to a conditioning mechanism that turns a vibrating stimulus into a rewarding task experience. Our findings have important implications for the effective design of haptic interfaces in marketing and the role of vibrotactile stimuli as a novel form of reward.

**Keywords:** *vibration; haptics; technology*

**Track:** Digital Marketing & Social Media